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**New Report Shows Professional Development Programs Improve
Pre-K Teacher-Child Interactions**

Professional Development leads to Better Emotional Support in Classrooms

ATLANTA, Ga., (January 13, 2015) – Two professional development models for prekindergarten teachers in Georgia have improved their interactions with children, according to a new report commissioned by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). Scientists from the University of North Carolina’s (UNC) Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) and Child Trends found that both approaches increased the emotional support that children received from their teachers.

FPG scientist Diane Early, lead author of the report, explained high-quality teacher-child interactions are essential for beneficial child outcomes. “We already know from FPG’s evaluation of Georgia’s Pre-K Program in 2014 that participation significantly improves children’s school readiness skills across a wide range of language, literacy, math, and other measures,” Early said. “Improved teacher-child interactions could further increase those benefits.”

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of two specific professional development models: Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) and MyTeachingPartner (MTP). MMCI is a face-to-face group training model, and MTP primarily uses one-on-one remote coaching. Previous research indicated that both of these professional development approaches could improve teacher-child interactions. The FPG research team and DECAL wanted to learn how they would work when tested under real-world conditions.

A total of 486 lead teachers in Georgia’s Pre-K Program were randomly assigned to MMCI, MTP, or a control group that received typical professional development. DECAL consultants served as MMCI trainers and MTP coaches.

The research team measured teacher-child interactions at the start and end of the Pre-K year using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), an observation tool with three components: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. DECAL uses the CLASS to measure the instructional practices and teacher-child interactions in Georgia’s Pre-K classrooms and to provide a framework for Pre-K teachers’ professional development.

The research team found that both the MMCI face-to-face training and the MTP remote coaching model improved the emotional support Pre-K teachers provided children through their interactions. MMCI also improved instructional support, one of the strongest predictors of children’s learning.

“MMCI significantly increased a teacher’s odds of attaining the level of quality interactions needed for Pre-K programs to most meaningfully contribute to children’s social and academic outcomes,” said Kelly Maxwell, senior program area co-director for early childhood at Child Trends and co-author of the report.

Maxwell added that feedback from participating teachers, instructors, and coaches showed they valued both approaches.

“We have worked hard to implement professional development that is meaningful to teachers and children,” said Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia’s Pre-K and Instructional Supports. “I am especially excited to know that teachers both benefited from and liked the interventions. We look forward to applying these findings to our other early education initiatives.”

DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs notes that the findings have implications beyond the state's nationally renowned Pre-K program. "This project demonstrates the impact that purposeful, well-designed professional development can have on children's classroom experiences. I look forward to sharing these findings with other education leaders across Georgia and the nation."

DECAL officials say that further study will help them understand the range of supports for teachers and coaches that would maximize the benefits of these professional development models. "More work is needed, but this project is an important step because it demonstrates a way to improve teacher-child interactions, which are critical to maximizing children's learning," said Commissioner Jacobs.

For a copy of the report: <http://www.decals.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProfDev.aspx>

About DECAL

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education.

For more information, go to www.decals.ga.gov.